

Clinic Services

Section

REFERRAL, COORDINATION AND OUTREACH

Subject

OVERVIEW

OVERVIEW	Identify social service and health programs in the local service area that may help WIC families.	04-06-01
REFERRAL	Federal regulations require WIC staff to refer participants, when appropriate, to other health and human services programs.	04-06-02
COORDINATION	Coordinate WIC services with other agency services such as immunization, migrant programs, and Health Tracks.	04-06-03
ADVOCACY	Inform and educate community citizens and leaders about WIC and its positive impact on health.	04-06-04
RELEASE OF INFORMATION/ CONFIDENTIALITY ABUSE NEGLECT	Participant information is confidential. The participant's signature on the Rights and Responsibilities form allows specific information to be released only to certain programs. Participant information may not be released to other programs or individuals without permission from the participant.	04-06-05
OUTREACH	The state and local WIC program shall conduct outreach activities to ensure that potential participants are informed about the existence and services of the WIC program and to ensure growth or maintenance of WIC participant caseload.	04-06-06

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REFERRAL

SUMMARY

Refer WIC families to target agencies and other programs and services that may benefit them.

REFERRAL
BROCHURE

A brochure titled "Community Services" is available from the State WIC office. The brochure alone is not considered a referral. In addition to giving the brochure, staff will inform participants what the referral agency does.

Each local agency can track their own referral agencies in *WICnet*. A list of referral agencies can be printed off for each local agency, with contact information (name and phone number). The list can be either a general listing of all referral organizations for that local agency or can be tailored to the specific referrals for that participant.

TARGET REFERRALS

Initial
Appointment

Federal regulations require that all WIC applicants be informed of the following target programs:

- SNAP (formerly Food Stamps)
- Medicaid - Healthy Steps
- TANF
- The Child Support Enforcement Agency

Phone numbers and program descriptions are provided in *Community Services* and the income guidelines for Medicaid and SNAP are part of the WIC annual income eligibility guidelines shared with staff. Some participants may need you to actually make an appointment for them.

MIGRANTS

If the local WIC agency serves migrant participants, develop outreach/referral networks with Migrant

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Health and the Migrant School Program. Data sharing is part of this referral process, but Release of Information forms need to be completed.

HOMELESS PARTICIPANTS

Outreach/
Notification

Annually, provide program information to programs serving homeless individuals. This includes, but is not limited to, homeless facilities, abuse shelters, homes for unwed mothers, ministerial groups, food pantries, social service programs, and medical programs ("free clinics," etc.). If homeless persons are served on a regular basis from one homeless facility, provide the agency with a copy of the *WIC Benefits Agreement for Individual Living in Institutions* (see Appendix 9).

OTHER FOOD
PROGRAMS

In addition to SNAP, refer WIC participants to other food programs for which they appear eligible (Free/Reduced Price School Lunch, food pantries, etc.). Inform persons who apply for WIC, but are ineligible, of these other food programs (i.e., families with older children might be eligible for free or reduced-price school lunches).

SUGGESTED
REFERRALS

Refer North Dakota WIC participants to other programs they may benefit from, including:

- Family Planning
- Alcohol and drug abuse counseling centers
- NDQuits, smoking cessation- 1-800-784-8669
- Child and adult abuse centers
- Immunizations
- Public Health
- Prenatal care- OPOP
- Well Child Clinics

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REFERRAL

- Emergency food banks
- Emergency shelters
- Adult and alternative learning centers
- Extension
- Head Start
- Child Tracking Programs
- EFNEP/FNP
- Private physicians
- Dentists

DOCUMENTATION

Referrals can be documented in *WICnet* by using the Tools menu or by clicking on the Referral icon.

Document in *WICnet* what referrals were made. At subsequent WIC visits, ask about the referral and record any follow-up action taken by the participant in *WICnet*.

CHILD'S HEALTH
INSURANCE

Refer families who are eligible for Medical Assistance and do not have health insurance to, either

1. Healthy Steps (Child Health Insurance Program, or CHIP) for service information and an application form call 1-877-543-7669 or go to their website @ www.nd.gov/dhs/services/medicalserv/chip/
2. Caring for Children Program sponsored by Blue Cross and Blue Shield. For information call 1-800-342-4718 or check out their website @ www.ndcaring.org

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COORDINATION

SUMMARY

Communicate, cooperate, and coordinate with other programs and services to assist WIC families.

LOCAL AGENCY
RESPONSIBILITIES

Coordination and outreach are reported on the quarterly nutrition services report.

Schedule WIC appointments when other services are available to the participant (ex: immunization or Health Tracks screening), if possible.

Coordinate with Immunization, Health Tracks, Family Planning, Optimal Pregnancy Outcome Program (OPOP), Migrant School/Health, Well Child Screening, and prenatal appointments.

NONDISCRIMINATION
STATEMENT

Outreach and referral materials that discuss participant benefits and eligibility requirements must contain the nondiscrimination statement. The statement reads:

The U.S. Department of Agriculture prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees and applicants of employment on the bases of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal and where applicable, political beliefs, martial status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.

If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the [USDA Program Discrimination Complaint form](#), found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html , or

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at any USDA office, or call 1-866-632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter to us by mail at U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Ave., S.W. Washington, DC, 20250-9410, by fax 202-690-7442 or email at program.intake@usda.gov .

Individual who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at 800-877-8339 or 800-845-6136 (Spanish).

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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ADVOCACY

SUMMARY

Inform and educate the public, health professionals, and government representatives about the proven effectiveness of WIC, Food Stamps, EFNEP, etc.

FEDERAL WIC
REGULATIONS

Periodically, drafts of proposed WIC regulations are issued for comment, which the State WIC office shares with local agencies. Since most proposals will directly affect WIC local staff and the people they serve, staff and participant input are necessary. Staff input on the consequences of the proposal is important.

SURVEYS/INQUIRIES

Child nutrition advocates, such as the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, and FRAC, may contact WIC agencies for information on their programs and for their comments on proposed regulations. Elected officials may also make inquiries regarding the operation of WIC in North Dakota. Responding to these inquiries enables these influential people to understand the operation and purpose of WIC.

If contacted by advocacy groups or elected representatives, please contact the State WIC office. Many times, the State WIC office can provide up-to-date statistics on WIC in North Dakota (food package costs, total money spent in the retail food markets, etc.).

EDUCATION

Speaking engagements to professional, community, church groups, etc., provide opportunities to promote the benefits of the WIC Program. This also enhances the visibility of WIC in the community.

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RELEASE OF INFORMATION/CONFIDENTIALITY

SUMMARY

Share WIC participant data under specific circumstances.

RELEASE OF
INFORMATION
FOR PURPOSES
OF OUTREACH
AND REFERRAL

Representatives from the North Dakota Department of Health and the North Dakota Department of Human Services have an agreement which allows local agency WIC staff to share specific participant information with these programs: Health Tracks, Children's Special Health Services, Head Start and Early Head Start, and Maternal and Child Health funded programs such as OPOP, immunization, newborn metabolic screening, well child, home visiting, and family planning.

This agreement, as well as the participant's signature on the Rights and Responsibilities form, allows WIC staff to release certain information. Participants/applicants may not refuse to sign the R & R. Participants/applicants may refuse to sign the release of information form and should be told in that case that their not signing will not affect their participation in WIC.

This information is released only for purposes of establishing program or service eligibility and conducting outreach for these designated programs. Programs entering into the agreement have agreed that their staff will not disclose any of the WIC participant information received without specific written consent from the participant. The information that may be released to these programs is name, birth date, address, phone number, income, height, weight, hemoglobin values, immunization status, and appointment times.

RELEASE OF
INFORMATION TO
OTHER PROGRAMS
OR INDIVIDUALS

In order to share information about the participant with individuals or programs not specifically listed above, the participant must give permission by completing the "WIC Release of Information" form found on the Outputs menu in *WICnet*.

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Procedure

Go to the Outputs menu in *WICnet* while in the participant's file, and select the "WIC Release of Information" form. *WICnet* generates a form with the participant's name and date of birth.

- Record the name and address of the agency that will receive/release the participant information.
- Describe the specific type of information needed or sent (ex: information on the child's growth, diet histories, etc.).
- State the general purpose for which the information will be used.
- Inform the participant of the type of information released/requested and why it was released/requested.
- Inform the participant that the agreement will last 12 months, unless they want to list a shorter or longer time frame. Inform the participant that this agreement may be canceled at any time.
- Have the parent/guardian sign the form.
- Persons unable to sign their name may use some other means to indicate approval; marks or verbal remarks should be witnessed and initialed by staff or notarized.
- Pregnant adolescents may sign their own release of information.

The WIC staff should then sign the form and send a copy of the release form and the information requested to the agency requesting the information. A copy of the "Release of Information" form will be kept on file in the WIC office.

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PARTICIPANTS

Participants, or their guardians, may have access to information they have provided to the WIC Program, but not other information such as staff assessment of condition or behavior, etc.

SECURITY ISSUES

When a request for information is received by telephone and you do not recognize the person calling (ex: new Immunization nurse, etc.), ask for the phone number of the person requesting the information and call them back to make sure they are whom they claim to be.

Written authorization from the participant is required to release:

- Medical information to a participant's friends, spouse, or relatives
- Information to a participant's employer, even if the employer simply wishes to confirm that the employee was at the clinic at a particular time
- Information to the Internal Revenue Service (ex: the value of food received during the year)

OTHER PARENT

Either or both parents may be identified as the parent/guardian for a child. If only one parent has been identified as the parent/guardian, you should not release information to the children's other parent or relative (or their attorney) without the authorization of the parent/guardian in the family.

FOSTER PARENT

Occasionally, a parent may enroll a child in WIC, but at a later date the child may be removed from the home and placed in foster care. You may discuss information about the child with the foster parent (growth charts and diet evaluations), but do not discuss information you may have in your notes regarding the parent.

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GUARDIAN AD LITEM If a guardian *ad litem* was appointed for a child by the court, release information only if directed in the court order or if you have the parent's signed authorization.

COURT SUBPOENA A subpoena is a request for information, issued by the clerk of court in response to a request by an attorney. A subpoena may be directed to an individual or to an entity. A subpoena does not represent a court's ruling that a WIC State or local agency must release requested information. If a lawyer subpoena is received, call the State WIC office and legal counsel for guidance before deciding to comply with or quash a subpoena.

SUBPOENA QUASH State or local WIC agencies, in consultation with their legal counsel, may decide not to comply with the subpoena and release the information requested, and attempt to quash the subpoena.

1. Call the State WIC office to discuss the circumstances of the subpoena.
2. If discussion indicates an attempt to quash the subpoena is necessary, legal counsel appears before the court to argue against release of information.

If the quash is denied, the State or local agency or legal counsel shall attempt to:

- Consider the appropriateness of an appeal.
- Ensure the information produced is only that which is essential to respond to the subpoena.
- Attempt to negotiate the extent to which WIC information becomes public information.

Legal counsel, acting on behalf of the State or local agency, should seek a written order to instruct an officer

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of the law to seize specific documents and deliver them to court.

SEARCH WARRANT

You must comply with a search warrant.

WIC staff will:

- Inform individuals producing the search warrant of the confidential nature of WIC information.
- Review the warrant and provide only the specific information requested in the search warrant.
- Notify the State WIC office and local legal counsel of the information provided, after the warrant request is filled.
- Retain a copy of the search warrant for WIC office files as evidence of the reason the information was released.

CHILD ABUSE
OR NEGLECT
EXCEPTIONS

Chapter 50-25.1 of the North Dakota Century Code (North Dakota Child Abuse and Neglect Law) requires WIC staff to report suspected child abuse or neglect.

Suspected abuse or neglect may be based on observation or information reported to you by a WIC applicant or participant.

Report suspected child abuse or neglect by completing Human Services form 960 (Report of Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect). The report must include your reasons for believing there may be abuse or neglect. Contact your local county social service office for copies of the form to keep on hand.

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If WIC is reporting the abuse/neglect staff will provide the documentation to support to the investigation if requested by Human Services. The Century Code requires that if the reporter has reasonable access to information sought by the investigator they need to share it. For example, if you have a failure to thrive situation that the parents do not seem to be taking seriously, you should share the child's growth chart to support your concerns of failure to thrive.

If the reported abuse comes from another program, etc, you cannot release information from WIC. If someone investigating a case calls you and asks for information about the participant, you cannot release this information without the participant's permission or a court subpoena.

All records concerning reports and names of persons filing the report of child abuse and neglect are kept confidential with limited disclosure as outlined in the law. Persons reporting child abuse or neglect are immune from prosecution under State and local laws.

CONFIDENTIALITY
IN PARTICIPANT
NOTIFICATION

When a participant calls to arrange the initial certification appointment, staff will ask the applicant for a phone number and address. Ask participants if WIC may contact them at that address and phone number. Ask if messages regarding WIC appointment changes may be left at that number.

REMINDER OF
WIC APPOINTMENT

Contact all pregnant women who apply and do not keep their initial certification appointments. Notices that are sent in the mail to pregnant participants should not have the WIC name or logo on the outside of the notice.

CALLER ID ON

Some phones have the Caller ID attached.

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THE TELEPHONE

WIC clinics should call their phone service carrier to have the word "private" printed on Caller ID windows when a call is made from WIC. This will allow anonymity and provide confidentiality for the participant.

RECORDS/REPORTS

Any reports or other documents resulting from the examination of WIC records that are publicly released may not include confidential applicant or participant information.

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OUTREACH PLAN

SUMMARY

The state and local WIC program shall conduct outreach activities to ensure that potential participants are informed about the existence and services of the WIC program and to ensure growth or maintenance of WIC participant caseload. The WIC Program must inform the public on WIC services at least annually.

LOCAL ACITVITY

Local WIC programs shall be responsible for conducting outreach to ensure that eligible persons in each local agency's service area are aware of the WIC Program and know where to seek services.

Staff are encouraged to target outreach efforts to those agencies and community resources that may serve or interact with WIC families. Suggested outreach contacts are listed under the Referral and Coordination Policy (04-06-02) since these are community resources that WIC families may interact with.

Local staff are required to notify the public and other potential referral sources in their communities through:

- media, such as radio and television community service announcements (if affordable);
- the WIC display unit, for use at health fairs, professional meetings, etc.;
- presentations at professional or service groups;
- distribution of WIC posters, brochures, and calendars in locations, or offices, that may be frequented by middle-to- lower income families

DOCUMENTATION

Staff report outreach activities on the WIC Quarterly Nutrition Services Report. The report asks staff to describe all outreach activities, (committee/coalition meetings, newspaper/newsletter articles, etc.), to share any new referral agencies and if they have identified any new ways to coordinate WIC services with other services/agencies (see 04-04-08).

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On the annual self-evaluation form, local agencies provide a summary of their outreach activities for the year. This form is collected, reviewed and discussed with state staff during the onsite monitoring visits.

Locals may also select outreach as one of their goals for their Annual Nutrition Services Plan (see 04-04-08).

OUTREACH
MATERIALS

The state WIC program develops and maintains specific outreach materials. Current available materials and resources include:

- North Dakota WIC Program Outreach brochure- includes benefits, eligibility requirements and local contact information- also available in Spanish
- WIC wall calendar – with promotional or breastfeeding message and local WIC agency contact information.
- What is WIC Flyer- WIC eligibility and services
- Toll Free line- For WIC and other Community Health programs
- ND WIC website- contains information on what is WIC, who qualifies, what to bring to that first appointment, local ND agency directory, etc. (Note: The link is promoted on the Health Department's website and the link has been shared with other partners to share on their sites like Healthy North Dakota and Hunger Free ND. The website is updated as income eligibility changes and the local directory as directors update addresses and contact information.)
- ND WIC display- the two table top display highlighting ND WIC is available for staff to use for county and health fairs, etc. See 03-02-11
- WIC Annual Report- highlights the ND program accomplishments, data, services, etc. and is shared by local staff with other programs, decision makers, etc.

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- WIC annual participant survey- periodically participants are asked to provide insight into the best ways for letting potential new families know about WIC.

Outreach materials may be ordered from the state WIC office.

STATE ACTIVITIES

When new income eligibility requirements are published the state issues a press release notifying the public of the new requirements, the Program benefits, who is eligible to receive WIC and how to access WIC services. Local staff are encouraged to offer their own press releases as a way to highlight their community WIC services.

State WIC staff serve on a variety of statewide task forces and coalitions (like Hunger Free ND, Chronic Disease coalition, Breastfeeding Coalitions) as another way of letting partners know of the program services.

WIC participation data, by category and county is shared annually with the ND Data Center for inclusion in their “Kids Count” publication.

State WIC staff work closely with other Health Department programs. For example, with MCH, WIC staff assist in the preparation of their annual plan and provide content input on infant feeding and WIC information for the “Parenting Newsletter”, which is shared with parents of newborns.

The state program provides consultation on outreach activities. The state staff serve as resources for the local staff who are looking for ideas. For example, the State Nutrition Services Director has shared examples of outreach activities collected from the quarterly and annual nutrition Education reports with staff.

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TARGETING

Special target populations are periodically identified for outreach efforts, such as SNAP household mailings. The state WIC office also shares information with other statewide partners such as Department of Public Instruction, Human Services, Maternal and Child Health and Children with Special Health Services.

MONITORING

The state WIC program monitors local programs for compliance with outreach requirements through the review of the quarterly reports, the annual plan, and the review of the local agency self-evaluation form and during on-site visits.

